Wellington City Libraries annual survey 2012

"I come from a country where, strangely enough, local and city libraries are underused. I am always amazed to see here how much and often libraries are used. This is a very good sign."

"I think that NZ has the most incredible library service in the world. I think that you are innovative and really provide a great place to visit."

"I think the library is a great asset and central meeting space for the city."

"The library is a great and important service provided to the community. I think that throughout one's life perhaps the need for the library might come and go somewhat but having the space available is so important!"

"LOVE the library. A weekend ritual that means a lot to our family."

"Having travelled and worked widely in the UK the Wellington libraries are second to none."

"The library is a great community service and should stay that way."

Summary report

Introduction

A second annual Wellington City Libraries (WCL) survey was distributed in October 2012, both via email and hard copy. The survey had a number of objectives, including: ascertain usage of specific WCL resources and services; measure user satisfaction with a range of WCL resources and services; identify possible areas for improvement, and; identify customer priorities for WCLs for the next 12 months. The survey covered a number of key areas of the library service, including: usage, access, physical resources, digital resources, services and customer service. There was also a special focus on the Aotearoa NZ/Maori reference collection in 2012.

The online survey was sent to a random sample of library members, consisting of both Wellington City residents, and residents of the wider Wellington region. The final sample consisted of 1,936 respondents, of which 346 surveys were completed, producing a response rate of 18%.

A limited number of hard copy surveys were also made available in all the Wellington City Library branches during the survey period. Of the 250 surveys made available, 109 were completed and returned, producing a return rate of 45%.

All respondents who completed the survey (both online and hard copy) were eligible for entry into a price draw, consisting of the chance to win one of ten $50 supermarket vouchers. The winners were drawn once the survey closed, and subsequently notified.

Although both surveys contained identical questions, a separate analysis of both survey modes was undertaken to address any differences between the survey modes (for instance, the online survey used automatic settings, whereas the hard copy version was contingent on respondents following the instructions correctly). In this report, hard copy respondents are referred to as HC.

A summary of the key findings is provided below.

Usage and access

In the last 12 months, 54% of online and 56% of HC respondents indicated that they usually visited the **Central library.**

"I cannot get to a library during your opening hours as I have a job, and not having access to library resources is severely detrimental to my quality of life."

For over half of respondents, the most convenient time to visit a WCL is **weekdays during business hours (9am-5pm).**

A number of respondents indicated that they used more than one branch over the last 12 months

"I do not use libraries as much as I would like to, as at the end of the day after working fulltime am too tired so am looking forward to when i retire to use libraries and start to enjoy reading."

Ease of accessing the library in person remains high (88% online and 94% HC). **Ease of accessing the library online** remains relatively high (61% online, 70% HC).

Physical collection

The **top four** collections used in the last 12 months were: **fiction** (59% online, 84% HC), **DVDs** (30% online, 52% HC), **children's** collection (29% online) and **magazines** (48% HC).

"...libraries are about the physical storage of quality books and articles, and the focus on electronic technology is to the detriment of this."

86% of online and 92% of HC respondents were satisfied with the **overall range of the library collection**.

80% of respondents across both survey modes were satisfied with WCL's **overall lending conditions**.

HC respondents reported higher levels of satisfaction across all collections. The **top two** across both survey modes were: **fiction** (71% online, 84% HC), and **magazines** (44% online, 67% HC).

"There is nothing like reading a physical book. The internet and iphones and ipads can never replace that."

Respondents still value and use the physical collections, even with an increasing range of digital products being made available.

Digital collection

Over 90% of respondents across both survey modes have **access to computers** at home. Just under 90% have **access to internet** at home (89% online, 88% HC).

The top three online resources used in the last 12 months: **Easyfind catalogue** (30% online, 40% HC), **classic catalogue** (44% online, 70% HC), **library website** (46% online, 56% HC).

Facebook was the most popular social media tool used on a weekly basis (59% online, 39% HC), although 24% of online and 44% of HC respondents reported they do not use social media tools on a weekly basis.

"The Central Library's Wi-Fi service is abominable: hard to connect, disconnects, logs out every 30 (?) minutes. It's part of Wellington City's Wi-Fi service. The Central Library should get its own free Wi-Fi service: one that works."

Respondents identified a number of areas for **improving WCL technology resources,** including improving WIFI service , making Kindle books available, developing a smartphone application, and improving online account functions.

Respondents reported that they were most likely to access online resources from home (59% online, 73% HC), although 51% of HC respondents reported using online resources at a WCL.

While usage of QR codes is low (10% online, 3% HC), usage of e-readers is higher (19% online, 21% HC). The most common type of e-reader used was the Kindle (6% online, 9% HC), although a number of respondents reported using tablet devices such as ipads.

Top three uses of the internet across both survey modes were: **finding information /searches, online transactions, and email.**

Library services

Checking accounts online was the most popular online service used in the last 12 months (38% online, 60% HC).

47% of online and 24% of HC respondents did not use any online service in the last 12 months.

86% of online and 93% of HC respondents were satisfied with **library services overall**.

80% of online and 88% of HC respondents indicated that the cost of providing library services in Wellington City (an average of $106.65 per resident per year) represents **good value for money**.

"I don't feel that some of the user-pays charges are appropriate for a public library. The library should exist to provide equal access to resources to all of its users, and some of these charges are not affordable for everyone."

"I would love to be able to pay any fines or fees on my card online. There are times when I can't make it to the library for weeks on end, and hate having that debt sitting there outstanding."

Both HC and online respondents indicated that there were a number of areas where WCLs could **improve its service**, including: extending library hours to beyond normal business hours; removing the fees for renewing books and returning items to different library branches; automatic and more timely reminders of due items; ability to review borrowing history, and longer lending periods.

At least 50% of respondents across both survey modes thought **library charges** for a range of services were reasonable.

Customer service

Over 80% of respondents reported that they found staff **friendly and approachable** (88% online, 93% HC), **competent** (91% online, 94% HC) and **available when needed** (81% online, 92% HC).

"There's nothing to improve. The customer service is perfect."

"The service is variable. Sometimes wonderful, sometimes extremely abrupt... depends on who is working that day on the counter."

" I like that there is still a very human side to Wellington libraries."

Email was the most preferred method for WCLs to communicate **information about their programmes and services** (71% online, 63% HC)

Email was the most preferred method for WCLs to communicate **information about user accounts** to respondents (76% online, 73% HC).

"The changes to the approach to customer service that does not assume that the user is at fault is commendable...The new changes to customer service policy creates a mutually beneficial approach to finding solutions to problems."

Both online and HC respondents indicated a number of ways that WCL customer service could be improved, including: more interactions with library patrons, improved communication around due items and increased online account functions.

Aotearoa NZ/Maori reference collection

While usage of the Aotearoa NZ/Maori collection was low amongst online users (8%), nearly a quarter (22%)of HC respondents had accessed it in the last 12 months.

Most people who accessed the collection in the last 12 months used the **history resources** (5% online, 16% HC). HC respondents also used it for government or legal resources (7%), literature resources (7%) general social comment and issues (7%) or Wellington regional resources (7%).

70% of online and 84% of HC respondents were **satisfied** with the reference collection.

The top two benefits of using the reference collection for both online and HC respondents were: **better resources than available at my usual library** (3% online, 9% HC) and **greater chance of finding the required resources because they can't be borrowed** (5% online, 9% HC).

56% of online and 61% of HC respondents expect all or most published information on regional Wellington heritage to be available at WCLs.

7% of online users expected all or most published information on NZ/Maori heritage to be available at WCLs (cf. 29% HC). 45% of HC respondents expected a representative coverage across subjects.

The top three types of information respondents across both survey modes expected to see retained in WCL's reference collection were: **history of any North Island town** (75% online, 67% HC), **history of any South Island town** (69% online, 60% HC), and **detailed maps of all national parks** (68% online, 60% HC).

4

Priority areas for next 12 months

Maintaining and building on current services, but with no associated cost increases, particularly in terms of user fees.

"Making sure that we still have a viable library service - even if this means making some difficult decisions - you will not be able to keep everyone happy. Libraries are wonderful places - let's keep them or at least some of them."

Investigate ways of communicating more effectively with customers – particularly in using technology to improve user experience of the WCL services.

Expand usage of the library and library services by undertaking more proactive to build awareness of what is on offer.

"Keep up the good work. Don't forget those of us who love to feel, smell and hold real books. Technology is fine but we love the real thing too."

Greater investment in e-books – particularly in terms of extending the formats available, and the range of the e-book collections.

Increase the functionality of the WCL website, and the overall search capabilities online – with a particular emphasis on more intuitive searching.

"Maintaining/increasing engagement with children and schools -- reading group, school visits, etc. Ensuring new generations of engaged readers is one of the most valuable things the library system can do, both for its own future, and for society as a whole. (Though as an enthusiastic reader, I may be biased.)"

Ensure continuing accessibility – both in terms of physical branches, but also affordability of services.

What will the future of libraries look like?

Most respondents rejected the notion that the library will not be personally needed in five years, as everything will be available online (77% online, 92% HC).

"Libraries are an incredibly valuable civic and community resource.... I know they will need to change and adapt with the growth of ebooks and online information and they do need to help guide people in how to find and use trusted, reliable information, but they will retain their importance and value, especially as large segments of the population still do not have access to efficient tech resources AND/OR do not have the information literacy to use them effectively or the income to buy and sustain them. Information literacy courses could become one of the valuable features libraries can offer, along with access to technology for those who don't and can't own it individually."

Most people believe nothing major will change in the next five years – libraries will continue to provide a representative range of resources and services so people are not disadvantaged (68% online, 85% HC).

Most respondents believe the library will play an important role in providing trusted information (74% online, 91% HC).

85% of HC respondents disagreed that there will be fewer library buildings because most people will access library resources online (cf. 55% online).

Most people disagree that the physical library collections will decrease greatly in the next five years, with just a few books and magazines available in hard copy (68% online, 89% HC).

Only 55% of online and 51% of HC respondents agreed that the library will evolve into a more stimulating community space to meet residents' future needs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Wellington City Libraries, please contact John Stears at john.stears@wcc.govt.nz   or Joanne Horner at joanne.horner@wcc.govt.nz